

# OCE20

## Offshore COSHH essentials



This information will help offshore dutyholders (owners, operators and contractors) to comply with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), as amended, to protect workers' health.

This guidance consolidates good control practice and reinforces existing knowledge with additional information.

It will help you carry out COSHH assessments, review existing assessments, deliver training and in supervising activities involving substances hazardous to health.

It is aimed at staff whose responsibilities include the management of substances hazardous to health on offshore installations (eg occupational health specialists, COSHH assessors, supervisors etc). It is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives.

Following this guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow this guidance, you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.

Also see essential information on the back of the sheet.

# Sewage system maintenance

## Control approach 1 General ventilation

### What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice for emergency maintenance and repair of foul water systems. It covers the key points you need to follow to help reduce exposure to an acceptable level, as part of your COSHH assessment.

### Hazards

- ✓ Raw sewage is a major source of harmful bacteria and other micro-organisms.
- ✓ The main risk is infection following hand-to-mouth contact, leading to gastro-intestinal disease.
- ✓ There may also be a risk of hepatitis, characterised by inflammation of the liver.
- ✓ Inhaling residues and spores may lead to asthma or rarely, allergic alveolitis.
- ✓ There are also risks of infection or skin disease via cuts or scratches, or by splashing, eg into the eyes.

### Access

- ✓ Erect barriers and notices.
- ✓ Warn everyone before isolating the waste water system, and notify them when the work is complete.

### Storage

- ✓ Segregate clean and contaminated equipment.

### Equipment and procedures

#### Control procedures

- ✓ Provide dedicated tools/equipment.
- ✓ Provide buckets with disinfectant and long-handled brushes for personal decontamination at the exit point.
- ✓ Ensure a good standard of general ventilation.

#### First aid

- ✓ Provide sterile wipes and clean water to cleanse wounds.
- ✓ Keep a supply of sterile adhesive waterproof dressings nearby.

#### Respiratory protective equipment (RPE) – see OCM4

- ✓ Where necessary, provide CE-marked RPE with an assigned protection factor of at least 10 for particles.

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### *Other protective equipment*

- ✓ Provide eye protection – a full-face visor.
- ✓ Provide disposable coveralls with a hood.
- ✓ Provide wellingtons or waterproof disposable overshoes.
- ✓ Provide waterproof, abrasion-resistant gloves, eg nitrile.
- ✓ Ensure that all cuts and abrasions are covered.

### **Cleaning and housekeeping**

#### *Decontamination*

- ✓ Assume that everything that might be contacted by sewage is contaminated.
- ✓ Clean and disinfect the area after the task.
- ✓ Use the 'buddy' system to decontaminate PPE and work clothing – minimise the spread of contamination.
- ✓ Change out of work clothing before exiting the area.
- ✓ Provide bags labelled 'Clinical waste – Biohazard' for all contaminated PPE.
- ✓ Disinfect or sterilise reusable work equipment.

**Caution:** If soiled, bag up work clothes for laundry as a separate load.

#### *Personal decontamination and skin care*

- ✓ Wash before eating or drinking, and after touching any surface or object that might be contaminated.
- ✓ Provide warm water, mild skin cleansers, nailbrushes, and soft paper, fabric towels or hot air for drying. Avoid abrasive cleansers.
- ✓ Replace nailbrushes regularly.
- ✓ Instruct workers in how to clean their skin effectively.
- ✓ Provide pre-work skin creams, which will make it easier to wash dirt from the skin, and after-work creams to replace skin oils.

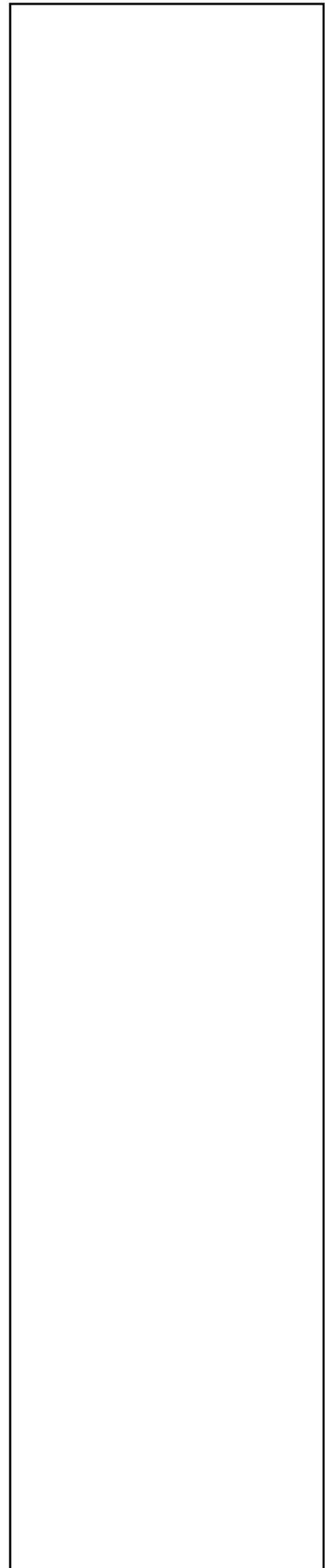
**Caution:** 'Barrier creams' or 'liquid gloves' do not provide a full barrier.

### **Health surveillance**

- ✓ Conduct low-level health surveillance for asthma using a respiratory questionnaire administered by a suitably trained responsible person.
- ✓ Conduct low-level health surveillance for dermatitis involving skin checks by suitably trained responsible person.
- ✓ Keep good records of gastric upsets – monitor that personal hygiene is adequate.
- ✓ Where appropriate, make available effective vaccines for those workers at risk of repeated exposure to raw sewage.

### **Training and supervision**

- ✓ Provide supervision – ensure that safe work procedures are followed.
- ✓ Tell workers, including maintenance workers, what the hazards and risks are.
- ✓ Explain the early signs of asthma and dermatitis.
- ✓ Explain the dangers of contact with sewage. Provide the HSE pocket card INDG197 – see 'Further information'. Tell workers to show it to the offshore medic in case of illness.



- ✓ Training includes toolbox talks on:
  - how to use the right safe working procedures;
  - checking for damage;
  - how to use RPE and check that it is working;
  - personal hygiene;
  - how to decontaminate effectively; and
  - what to do if something goes wrong.
- ✓ Involve managers and supervisors in health and safety training.

### Essential information

OCE0 *Advice for managers*

OCM3 *Personal protective equipment (PPE)*

OCM4 *Respiratory protective equipment (RPE)*

### Employee checklist

- Are you clear about the safe procedures for doing the job?
- Is your respirator working properly? Check it every time.
- Clean up leaks and spills immediately.
- Look for signs of wear and damage to equipment.
- If you find any problem, get it fixed. Don't just carry on working.
- Co-operate with health surveillance.
- Report all illnesses to your supervisor.
- Use, look after and store your PPE in accordance with instructions.
- Wash hands before starting the job, and before eating, drinking or using the lavatory.

### Further information

Department of Health 'Green Book' *Immisation against infectious disease*  
[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

Brugha R, Heptonstall J, Farrington P et al 'Risk of Hepatitis A infection in sewage workers' Immunisation Division, PHLS Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, London

*Working with sewage: The health hazards – A guide for employees* Pocket card INDG197 HSE Books 1995  
[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg197.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg197.pdf)

You can find the full Offshore COSHH essentials series at [www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm)

**This guidance was developed by representatives from the UK offshore oil and gas industry and trade unions, with HSE.**